

Price of Eagle includes Uncle Sam's cut

By Roger Boye

This week's column answers more questions about coins and paper money.

Q—I spent \$520 for a one-ounce American Eagle on a day when gold sold for \$493 an ounce. Did I get a fair deal? Also, who profited from the extra \$27 I paid over the coin's "gold value"?

T. R., Chicago

A—Sales commissions on one-ounce Eagles normally range from 5 to 7 percent; your \$27 equates to about 5½ percent of the gold price. Uncle Sam got about half of your commission to pay for production and marketing costs, while the wholesalers and retail dealer split the rest.

Q—Ive seen advertisements for some American Eagles with "one troy ounce of gold" and other Eagles with "one ounce of gold." Is there a difference in those coins?

W. P., Morton Grove

A—No. Gold and silver almost always are measured in troy weights; the word "troy" often is dropped in casual references.

Q—I found a \$5 bill with almost no margin along the top edge and an extremely wide margin at the bottom. Is it worth saving?

E. T., Melrose Park

A—Probably not. The printing error you describe is common among collectors. Federal Reserve notes are printed on large sheets of paper, 32 to the sheet. Hobbyists prefer to own bills with designs so far off-center that the edge of an adjoining bill is visible.

Q—Years ago my grandfather made a necklace out of four U. S. half cents dated 1850, the

year our ancestors arrived from Germany. The coins show almost no wear except for tiny holes drilled in them for the chain. Are my half-cents rare?

K. L., Cicero

A—As a family heirloom, the coins are priceless. But as numismatic keepsakes, coins with holes usually have little value.